

A Comparative Analysis of States' Workforce Training Programs

By Eileen McAnneny



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Introduction:

The purpose of this report is to provide readers with a comparative analysis of the Massachusetts workforce “system” structures and performance reporting processes compared to other states. Though the federal workforce development system is often examined in its entirety and individual state systems are at times examined independently, little research has been done on the relative similarities and differences among the various state workforce training and development systems.

Workforce training and development, broadly defined, is both an economic development approach that prioritizes labor productivity by maximizing the employability of labor force participants while minimizing the costs of recruitment for employers, and a labor enhancement system that protects and supports worker needs, portability and other factors that companies may not provide. In this sense it is a “dual customer” model that optimizes the natural mechanisms of the labor market by breaking down barriers to entry and enhancing employment opportunities. This often entails government agencies’ involvement (local, state, and federal) through the provision of publicly funded education, training, and placement services to job seekers and employers alike.

Considering the current national labor shortage, the mismatch in skills required for available jobs and those of job seekers, and the importance of closing that divide, it is essential to understand the states’ various approaches to workforce training and development. This is especially important for a state like Massachusetts that relies on a skilled workforce to grow its advanced economy yet is experiencing net outmigration and declining higher-education enrollment.¹ By examining what other states are doing to address their workforce shortages, Massachusetts policy makers can determine if there are lessons to be learned from other states for how best to fund, structure, and measure these programs.

The extent of publicly funded workforce training programs available to accomplish this goal of matching employees’ skills with employers’ needs varies greatly among the states. It is unclear if more public investment in these workforce training programs results in better outcomes for employers and employees because there is insufficient and/or inconsistent data to conduct that type of analysis.

One potential baseline for measuring results is the relative performance of federally funded workforce development programs common to all states (and there are a multitude of federally funded programs that serve different populations and purposes). However, even this metric does not allow for a 1:1 comparison between states due to the flexibility afforded to states to use federal funding to design programs that meet their labor market conditions. Thus the designs for federal programs vary among the states. Despite receiving large portions of their workforce development funding from the federal government, states retain significant autonomy over the structure and implementation of their programs. As a result, reviews often vary in their conclusions. Most federal evaluations judge federal programs based on the particular outcome measures assigned to those programs — gaining employment, employment retention, wage gain, skill gain, etc. Therefore, it is worthwhile to explore workforce development systems on a state-by-state basis, and that is what this report attempts to do.

The report covers the following topics: (1) the state of the US and Massachusetts labor markets, (2) the federal financial and regulatory underpinning of state workforce training and development programs; (3) an overview of the workforce development structures of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Florida, Maine, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Texas, and Vermont; and (4) a comparison of the performance-review processes and outcomes and (5) recommendations for improving the Massachusetts workforce training and development system.

It should be noted that the states mentioned above were included in this comparative analysis due to: (1) their proximity to Massachusetts, as is the case for the New England states; (2) the similarity of their industry sectors and workforce characteristics, as with North Carolina, New York and New Jersey; or (3) because of the strong labor market as is the case with Florida and Texas.

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US Labor Market

The US is experiencing a nationwide labor shortage. This tight labor market means job openings outnumber those seeking employment, leaving many available positions unfulfilled. As of October 2024, there were 7.4 million open positions and 5.7 million individuals seeking employment.² Stated differently, even if every labor force participant found work, there would still be 1.7 million unfilled positions.

The [national unemployment rate](#) as of October 2024 was 4.1 percent. This number reflects how many Americans are actively seeking employment and does not account for the many people of workforce age who are not employed and not looking for employment. The labor force participation rate (LFPR), which represents the percentage of the total workforce age population that is currently employed, stands at 62.6 percent as of October 2024, down from 63.3 percent in February 2020. Many individuals cite child and family care, and health issues as the main reasons for not participating in the labor force.³ Another reason cited for nonparticipation is the acquisition of new skills, education, or training. In a recent survey, 36 percent of Americans aged 25–34 claim they are focused on personal growth over seeking employment again.⁴

These existing labor market conditions provide both an opportunity and a challenge for state workforce development systems to provide those presently unemployed with the skills they need to reenter the labor force.⁵ These tight labor market conditions occur at a time of positive general macroeconomic trends. Real GDP increased at an annual rate of 2.8 percent in the third quarter of 2024, inflation (as measured by the Consumer Price Index) is coming down, and corporations remain profitable.⁶ Therefore, a common workforce policy focus among the states included in this analysis is increasing labor force participation by preparing workforce-age Americans to re-enter into the workforce and equip them with the skills they need for gainful employment and self-sufficiency.

Massachusetts Labor Market

Massachusetts labor market dynamics mirror those of the nation but are more pronounced. For example, the [Massachusetts Worker Shortage Index \(WSI\)](#), which measures the tightness of its labor market on a scale from zero to one, is 0.65 as of November, 2024. That means 65 workers were available for every 100 jobs. [As of November, 2024](#), there are 149,700 unemployed workers for 228,966 open positions. At 66.4 percent, the Massachusetts labor force participation rate is higher than the national average of 62.6 percent, while its unemployment rate of 3.9 percent is lower than the national average of 4.1 percent.⁷

Given these statistics, the primary goal of the Massachusetts workforce training system is to incentivize greater participation in the labor market of those currently on the sidelines while retaining those already in the workforce.

The Federal Law and Funding are the Cornerstone for State Workforce Training Development Systems

The federal government has played a central role in workforce training. Beginning with the enactment of the Wagner-Peyser Act in 1933⁸ that established a nationwide system of public employment, the federal government has collaborated with states in creating and maintaining public employment services for the past nine decades.

The Wagner-Peyser Act was amended by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998⁹, and subsequently the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014¹⁰, which was reauthorized in 2022 until 2028¹¹. The collective elements of WIOA provide the framework for the nation's workforce development system.

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The WIOA consists of four core workforce development programs: (1) youth, adult, and dislocated worker employment and training services, (2) adult education and literacy services, (3) employment and placement services, and (4) vocational rehabilitation services (for those with disabilities). WIOA requirements shape the programmatic structure of all state workforce development systems, as compliance requires that these core services be offered.

One such WIOA requirement is the formation of state Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) that emphasize local, business-oriented, and representative decision making in the development of WIOA State Plans. These plans must be submitted to the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Agency (ETA) for review and must outline four-year strategic pathways and performance goals. Each WDB receives funding from the ETA and distributes it to local workforce development boards (LWDBs), which then invest said funding in the local American Job Centers that offer the four core services outlined above.

Thus, the foundation of every state's workforce development system is similar, though federal law provides some flexibility in this regard. The WIOA should be understood not as a comprehensive structure to which all states must conform exactly, but rather a set of minimum standards that every state must meet. Many states go beyond what the federal government requires by establishing state-run and state-funded programs. There is sufficient variation among states' workforce training structures to warrant a closer examination.

Workforce development programs are primarily funded by the federal government through annual appropriations to both the states and non-state entities, such as non-profits and labor unions, as well as periodic, competitive federal grants. Federal WIOA Title 1 and 3 funds are distributed to states on the basis of each state's relative share of the nation's civilian labor force (CLF) and total unemployment, with the majority of the money allotted for services such as job search and placement assistance, labor market information, and referral to employers. A small portion of the state allotment may be used for discretionary activities such as performance incentives and services for groups with special needs.

An Overview of State Workforce Training Structures

With WIOA as the cornerstone for all state workforce development infrastructure, states fall into two camps—those that adhere closely to the requirements of WIOA and those that fund and offer extensive programs beyond what WIOA requires.

Massachusetts

Massachusetts has a workforce development system that leverages state funding beyond WIOA requirements and therefore is more extensive than other states' offerings¹².

The Massachusetts workforce training system administers funding primarily through four separate secretariats, each focused on a particular cohort of the unemployed. The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) houses the majority of US Department of Labor federal workforce funding through the MA MassHire system and serves youth, adult (unemployed, underemployed, incumbent workers) and companies. The Executive Office of Education (EOE) focuses on the future workforce with K-20 pipelines and training and provides the highest volume of new skill development through K-12 and post-secondary institutions compared to the volume of individuals who get free training through MassHire federally funded programs). The Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED) bids out grants to support training in manufacturing, cyber security or IT through MassTech and the MassLife Sciences Centers. Finally, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) houses the majority of federal workforce funds targeting specific populations such as individuals with disabilities (WIOA Vocational Rehabilitation Funding), SNAP and TANF workforce funding, SCEP federal funding and several major state funded workforce programs targeting healthcare

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workers. In recent years, workforce training programs in combination with social services have become even more dispersed throughout several executive agencies.

A Workforce Skills Cabinet (WSC), originally composed of EOLWD, EOE, and EOHEd was formed by Governor Baker to better coordinate programs and enhance cross-agency collaboration. Governor Healey added EOHHS¹³. The creation of Governor Healey's MassTalent initiative has led to a Workforce Skills Cabinet working group with EOLWD, EOE, EOED, HHS plus EOEa, Mass.Clean Energy Center, Mass. Technology Collaborative, Mass, Life Science Center and Commonwealth Corporation¹⁴.

As part of its collaborative effort, the Workforce Skills Cabinet oversaw the creation of seven regional blueprints for growth that specified regional industry priorities, labor market conditions, and the rollout of competitive grant processes for state workforce funding focused on industry hiring needs. The seven regional blueprints guide statewide grant funding awards. In addition, data from the blueprints and input from a series of stakeholder meetings were used to develop the WIOA-required statewide workforce development plan in 2017, 2020 and again this year¹⁵.



To carry out the day-to-day workforce training program operations in MA, WIOA is operated through 16 workforce development boards and 22 MassHire Career Centers throughout the state, plus youth career centers and affiliated sites. In addition to providing career services, each of the MassHire centers implements the federal WIOA requirements and distributes its resources by connecting individuals to the myriad of federally funded workforce resources and state-based competitive grant programs. MassHire also connects customers with SNAP and TANF, SCEP, VETs and many other programs that partner with WIOA.

MassHire offices offer many programs for businesses including:

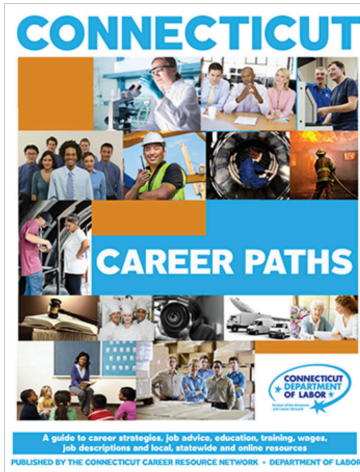
- **JobQuest** is designed to make it easier for an employer to find candidates for job openings, post job vacancies and register for recruitment events or job fairs at MassHire Career Centers
- **Rapid Response** mitigates the impact of a major layoff or plant closing through coordination of services and aid to companies and outplacement services for workers.
- **Workforce Opportunity Tax Credit**—MassHire administers this tax incentive program for employers who hire employees within nine specified groups.
- **Training for Company Employees**

In addition, EOLWD's Department of Career Services and the Commonwealth Corporation administer competitive grant programs to supplement the very limited supply of training dollars coming through the federal system (WIOA-paid "voucher" system). Massachusetts also offers multiple competitive grant programs for training through its Career and Technical Education

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Initiative, the Workforce Training Fund Program, and the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund to supplement gaps in WIOA funding and services. In addition, several quasi-public agencies, including the MassTech Collaborative, the Life Sciences Center, and the Clean Energy Center bid out funding to support training for jobs in these specific industries. MassHire partners with these quasi organizations and other stakeholders to supplement funding for their regions for specific industries to supplement federal dollars. This extensive network of funding streams for training created by the state Legislature does not exist amongst the other states examined in this analysis, except for Connecticut.

Connecticut



Like Massachusetts, Connecticut offers a plethora of job training and placement services through numerous departments dedicated to very specific cohorts of job seekers. Like MA, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Administrative Unit provides federal funds to the state's five [Workforce Development Boards \(WDBs\)](#)¹⁶, administers WIOA activities and services, and allocates WIOA funds to local organizations that assist unemployed and underemployed individuals in all aspects of training and job placement.

In addition, within the Connecticut Department of Labor are a Business Engagement office (address employer hiring needs), American Jobs Centers (free job search), Office of Apprenticeship Training (certifications to increase workforce proficiency), Job First Employee Services (training for TANF recipients), Rapid Response (response to large layoffs or plant closings), Unemployed Workers Advocates (help for the unemployed to obtain benefits), among other departments. Connecticut is rich in training resources, and the Office of Labor Research provides an enormous amount of data about employment, unemployment and the like, but very little information on the results of its training programs is available to the public on the government website.

In contrast, **Maine**¹⁷, **Rhode Island**¹⁸, **New Hampshire**¹⁹, and **Vermont**²⁰ do not have state-funded programs that extend much beyond what is required by the federal government. The decision not to allocate additional state resources to workforce training could be due to fiscal concerns, their small populations, relatively low unemployment, a well-educated workforce, and/or private sector training options. Small workforce training bureaucracies do not necessarily mean limited training offerings. For example, Rhode Island offers about 100 WIOA eligible training programs.

New York

New York's workforce training system, though extensive in scope like Massachusetts, takes a different approach. Broadening the scope of economic development to include its workforce development system²¹, New York folds its workforce development initiatives into the state's larger economic development plan. The Massachusetts government is organized such that workforce development is complementary to economic development rather than intrinsic to it as in New York.

The New York workforce development system is headed by the Office of Strategic Workforce Development (OSWD) within Empire State Development, an umbrella organization that oversees the New York State Urban Development Corporation and the New York Job Development Authority²². The OSWD was created in 2022 with the explicit purpose of focusing New York's workforce development efforts on sector-based training in partnership with the State University of New York (SUNY) and City University of New York (CUNY) systems in order to address the gap between available jobs and skilled workers.

New York folds its workforce development initiatives into the state's larger economic development plan.

The Commonwealth Corporation in Massachusetts performs a similar function in that it facilitates partnerships between community colleges and MassHire for CTI and the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund (WCTF) monies, though it does so at much more modest levels and separate and apart from the economic development agencies. While Massachusetts coordinates with regional economic development councils, the process appears to be more convoluted than New York's approach.



Like Massachusetts, New York's OSWD focuses on both employer needs and career pathways for workers by ensuring that New Yorkers have access to quality training that meets the business needs of high-growth industries and prepares workers with skills for dynamic career pathways in high-growth sectors. Taking a more streamlined approach, New York's OSWD works closely with the state's 10 regional economic development councils, whereas Massachusetts MassHire Boards, the Commonwealth Corporation and the Office of Business Development collaborate with regional economic development organizations.

The OSWD administers a fund of \$350 million in state revenues intended to support new training and grant programs across state agencies that better align workforce development efforts with the current needs of employers. In addition, \$115 million is available in multi-year funding for flexible operations and performance-based grants for workforce training providers. Another \$35 million in capital grants is available to help providers enhance facilities and programming. WIOA funds, meanwhile, are administered as expected by the 33 Local Workforce Development Areas with input from the State Workforce Investment Board

A potential reason for housing workforce development programs in the Empire State Development program could be that in May 2022 the New York Comptroller determined the State Workforce Board to be functionally irrelevant, having been inactive for five years, derelict in the development of a WIOA State Plan and otherwise underperforming.²³ Whatever the reason for doing so, this approach indicates a subtle but important difference in the emphasis and prioritization of workforce development as an integral strategy for growing the economy.

Another noteworthy distinction between New York and Massachusetts is each state's approach to WIOA programming. In Massachusetts, the MassHire boards are the implementers of the WIOA requirements and the center of the Massachusetts workforce system. This structure emphasizes training as the primary or end goal, rather than the means to achieve broader strategic economic goals. In contrast, the OSWD appears to be institutionally separate from its State Workforce Investment Board and the Local Workforce Development Boards. Though these offices provide career resources on the local level, OSWD's placement in the Empire State Development indicates that the priority is economic development.

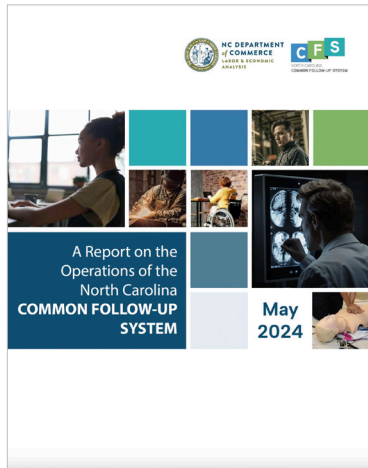
New York's rationale for having the same agency that distributes grant-funding for training programs and tracks trainee outcomes also develop statewide sector-based economic development strategies is to allow OSWD to more closely target spending to critical industries, more frequently engage with industry leaders, and better design workforce training programs to meet their rapidly changing needs. Because of this, ESD claims itself to be uniquely capable of "strategic business attraction" and "attracting high-growth industries" in the interest of job creation.

Sufficient data has not been collected to determine if New York's integrated approach will result in better outcomes, though the logic for doing so is sound. Perhaps that is why Massachusetts has placed more focus on integration of workforce and economic development in recent years. The

Workforce Skills Cabinet was created under Governor Baker to ensure closer coordination of the economic development and workforce training systems, and the Healey/Driscoll administration's current economic development plan takes additional steps to more closely integrate workforce development into the state's economic development plan utilizing the recently created MassTalent portal. Consideration should be given to having both responsibilities fall under one state agency to further integrate and better align these two priorities.

North Carolina

North Carolina is unique in that it houses its workforce training infrastructure in its Department of Commerce rather than the Department of Labor. Perhaps that is why the mission of the NCWorks Commission,²⁴ the 37-member statewide workforce training board, is more result oriented than other states. Its mission is “to ensure North Carolina has an innovative, relevant, effective, and efficient workforce development system that develops adaptable, work-ready, skilled talent to meet the current and future needs of workers and businesses to achieve and sustain economic prosperity; and to ensure North Carolinians are ready for the jobs of today and tomorrow by increasing access to education and skills training, fostering employer leadership to prepare workers, and supporting and scaling local innovation.”²⁵ One unique feature of the North Carolina workforce infrastructure is its Spotlight on Local Workforce Innovations series that showcases local innovations in collaborative, employer-led workforce development partnerships across the state.”



Like other states, North Carolina provides monthly reports on labor statistics, unemployment rates, job openings and other such data. Unlike other states, however, North Carolina stands out with respect to measuring results. The state provides extensive information on the results of its training programs using a dashboard format that is user-friendly and easy to understand. Detailed information on the educational and employment outcomes of participants in publicly supported educational, employment and training programs for use in planning, policymaking, program evaluation, resource allocation and career planning is publicly available on the state's website.

This data can be found on the Education & Workforce Program Outcomes page, which houses information about the Common Follow-up System (CFS)²⁶. The Common Follow-up system (CFS) is a longitudinal data repository that collects and interprets WIOA outcomes-based data and reports information regarding system operations, evaluative efforts and activities, though it should be noted that as of November 2023, the most recent available CFS data was from 2020–2021.

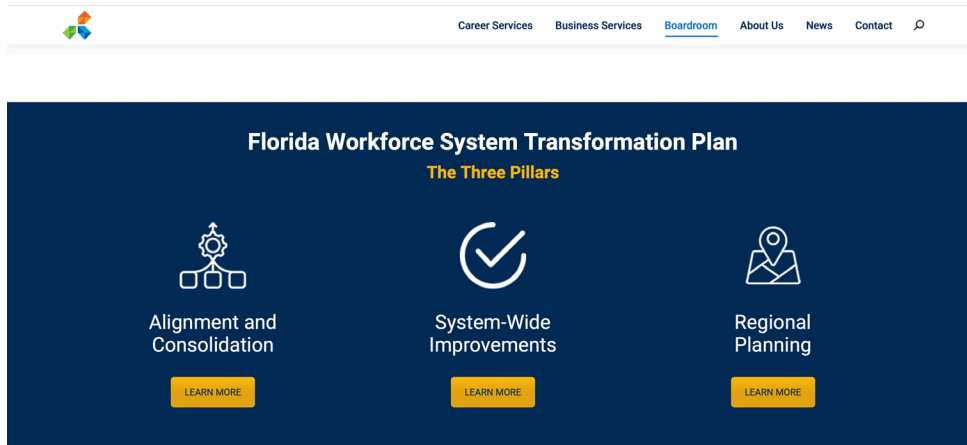
Florida

As a geographically large state with a sizable and growing population, a rural-urban divide, and a relatively low tax environment, Florida's workforce development goals differ from Massachusetts' in several ways and so does its workforce development infrastructure. Florida overhauled its workforce development system in 2021. The Reimagining Education and Career Help, or REACH Act, is a “comprehensive, blueprint for supporting the state's evolving economy through a more integrated, customer-focused and accountable workforce development ecosystem that spans Florida's education, workforce development and public assistance programs.”²⁷ CareerSource Florida²⁸, the state policy and investment board, is run by a board of directors appointed by the governor and composed of business, government, labor, education, economic development and community development leaders who provide policy direction for annual workforce investment that totaled [\\$226.8 million in FY2023/24](#). In conjunction with the REACH reforms, Florida initiated the

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Florida overhauled its workforce development system in 2021 through a more integrated, customer-focused and accountable workforce development ecosystem.

Florida Workforce System Transformation Plan. Finalized in 2023, this comprehensive plan aims to create efficiencies and strengthen outcomes while ultimately reducing the number of local workforce development boards. Pillars of the plan include: (1) alignment and consolidation; (2) systemwide improvements and (3) regional planning.

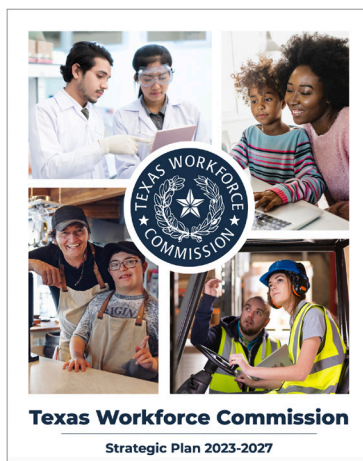


Florida’s revamped workforce development system has had good results to date. CareerSource publishes its annual accomplishments, which are extensive. It has also built out its website to provide a wide range of performance data, broken down by region and with respect to in-demand occupations.

Texas

Texas is like Florida in terms of geographic area, large population, rural-urban divide and relatively low tax environment. Another shared trait is their reliance on a streamlined workforce development infrastructure to manage and distribute resources.

Texas does not have a state Department of Labor. Instead, the Texas Workforce Commission²⁹ was created in 1995 to consolidate programs dealing with employment-related education and training. The TWC also oversees unemployment insurance, state labor laws and maintaining statistical information about the labor market. Much like New York, TWC’s purpose is to “strengthen the Texas economy by providing the workforce development component of the Governor’s economic development strategy. Texas boasts an incredibly skilled workforce ready to attract enterprise to the Lone Star State. By focusing on the needs of employers, TWC gives Texas the competitive edge necessary to draw business here.” The Texas Workforce Commission is governed by three commissioners appointed by the Governor — one laborer, one employer and one public representative — and reports directly to the Governor.



Adhering closely to the WIOA framework, Texas’s statewide Workforce Boards, known as the Workforce Investment Council, oversees the workforce development system in partnership with 28 local workforce development boards. For context, though Texas is 33 times the size and has a population that is quadruple that of Massachusetts, it has less than twice as many local workforce development boards.

The TWC’s 2025–2029 Strategic Plan³⁰ outlines its vision and core beliefs. Emphasized elements include a market-based approach, acknowledgement of an individual’s personal responsibility for decisions and accountability for actions as well as a commitment to internal and external transparent communications. There is also

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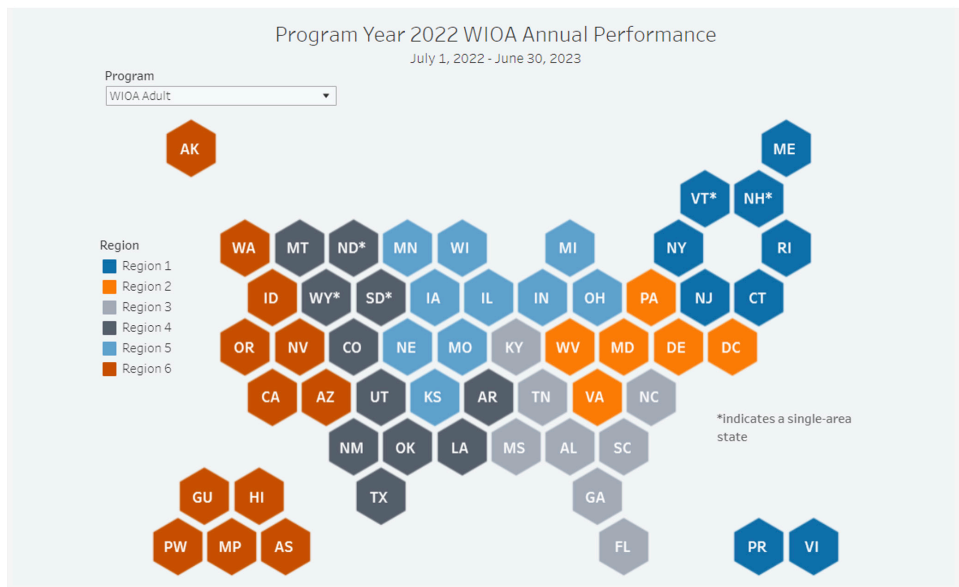
an explicit commitment to flexibility, technology, and innovation to promote workforce development success. The plan includes clearly defined performance metrics, data shortcomings, costs for each program and other such information that advances these core beliefs.

Comparative Analysis of States' Workforce Performance and Reporting

Each state observed in this study calculates its workforce development spending and determines programmatic performance differently. This makes it virtually impossible to conduct one-to-one outcome-based and cost-benefit comparative analyses. Where consistent reporting metrics exist in one state, they are lacking in another, and where data exists for both, it is reported differently.

The only consistent performance metrics reported across states are those required by the federal WIOA framework. All states are required to submit basic information to the US Department of Labor as part of WIOA compliance³¹. That information, presented in a variety of formats, is available on the department's website in the aggregate and at the state level. Much of the data collected by the USDOL is to show compliance with federal standards and in the interest of continued funding. There is also detailed USDOL data for each state, but its primary purpose is not to evaluate the efficacy of programs on a comparative basis. Thus, the following analysis reviews what additional performance information is available from the states and what discernible practices Massachusetts could adopt to improve transparency and performance.

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Connecticut

Connecticut is more advanced in reporting on programmatic performance outcomes than Massachusetts. In recognition of its workforce development data shortcomings, Connecticut set out in 2021 to develop data and performance measurement tools at both the systemic and programmatic levels to capture information on programmatic participants, services, and outcomes. The Offices of Performance Management and Workforce Systems are in the process of building a series of publicly available workforce data dashboards³². The state Department of Labor, in coordination with other agencies, has inventoried all current programs with comprehensive enrollment and outcomes data. Next steps include developing a usable format for all program level data that will be updated regularly along with a standard process for presenting and analyzing data to inform decision making.

Connecticut is also enhancing the state's longitudinal data system. The Preschool through 20 and Workforce Information Network system (P20 WIN) serves as the central repository for data on

the Connecticut population derived from 13 state agencies, institutions of higher education, and nonprofits, most of which are closely involved in its workforce development system.³³ The data collected for P20 WIN is aggregated and provides Connecticut policymakers with the information to “identify areas where education, workforce training and supportive services” fall short, thus addressing “critical policy questions.” P20 WIN is governed by an executive board, a data governing board, and a set of data stewards who represent their participating organizations.³⁴

Over time, P20 WIN will be expanded to incorporate data on social programs addressing homelessness, child welfare, financial aid and other programs across a much broader cohort of users. Such a system can provide valuable information for resource prioritization on such things as the extent to which providing preschool correlates to employment outcomes.

Although Connecticut has not completed its data collection and metrics system, it has articulated a clear purpose and structure that holds great promise for increasing transparency of its workforce development outcomes.

Florida

When Florida revamped its workforce development structure, it also revised its workforce performance reporting³⁵. For the first time in 30 years, Florida set out to modernize its workforce system with the straightforward strategy of adopting enhancements and improvements to create efficiencies and strengthen outcomes for job seekers and businesses. The goal was to improve consistency and maximize resources. It undertook the tedious work that engaged more than 700 local and state stakeholders to complete an alignment, evaluation and research process for its workforce development program offerings. It made accountability and transparency top priorities.

The initial results are very promising. The CareerSource Florida website publishes audits on each local workforce board, along with financial statements and report cards. It breaks down funding sources for workforce training programs and resource allocation. It also outlines outcomes for job seekers regarding employment, wage increases, and the number of individuals who have moved off public assistance. In addition, it provides data on business service outcomes, indicating the number of businesses served, the amount of incumbent workforce training provided, and the number of businesses and employees provided with quick response training.

In furtherance of its accountability and transparency goals, the 2024 WIOA Compliance Plan³⁶ demonstrates Florida’s compliance, while also articulating well-defined qualitative and quantitative goals, and a cohesive workforce development system. New features include a centralized portal for resources, comprehensive data on in-demand occupations, and more seamless integration of labor market information.

Despite Massachusetts’ emphasis on providing workforce supports in addition to training as a key workforce development strategy, it does not attempt to quantify outcomes in terms of individuals moving off public assistance, increasing their salaries or other measurable criteria for evaluating a program’s success.

Texas

The Texas workforce development performance review process, like the system itself, is structured around its WIOA governance system. The Texas Workforce Commission, the entity overseeing the Texas Workforce System in partnership with its 28 regional workforce development boards, annually evaluates each of these local offices. The Texas Workforce Commission is statutorily required to grade each board on its fiscal management, staff capacity, career center oversight, contractor selection and management, and issue resolution, providing more transparency and accountability than most other states.³⁷ The TWC is also required to establish in public meetings the criteria on which it will judge the performance of its local workforce development board, and to post the results of its evaluations, with explanation, on a forum available to the public. These explanations are required to include descriptions of the Board-specific application of criteria.

In practice, the evaluation is not as stringent, nor the process as standardized as the statutory language indicates. Each local board must submit a written statement “summarizing its impact on and relationship with the local community and economy,” but the amount and type of information submitted by each varies. Some boards incorporate data-based analyses of total customers and employers served, along with outcome-based information such as hires, median earnings, and credential attainment, while others do not. The result of this process is a Board Oversight Capacity Scorecard (BOCS)³⁸ for each local workforce board.³⁹

Though imperfect, the TWC performance review system represents an established, timely, and transparent evaluation of its workforce boards; something that Massachusetts appears to lack, or at least to not publicize. Requiring each local board to provide detailed information also creates a sense of competition among them that may improve the overall statewide performance.

North Carolina

North Carolina collects and capitalizes on its data to a greater extent than any other state in this analysis. It was the first of the states analyzed to collect longitudinal, outcome-based data on a consistent basis and outperforms its peers in making that data public and easily accessible. The NC Common Follow-Up System (CFS), first developed in 1992, provides information on the educational and employment outcomes of participants in publicly supported educational, employment, and training programs.⁴⁰ It has been continuously improved to include new sources of data and employ new technology and cross-agency data systems. CFS grew out of recognition by a group of state agencies that quality outcome information was needed on the participants for program planning, evaluation, and resource management and is now used to inform policy decisions.

The NC Workforce Delivery Outcome Dashboard (WDOD)⁴¹, collects data from the 22 local workforce development areas on (1) individuals served, (2) detailed services provided, and (3) outcomes. The repository begins with information from 2015–2016 that is augmented annually, collecting data on customers such that each year a new class of customers is added and tracked, along with the rest. The outcomes section tracks wage distribution and percent employed for recipients of the different services. Each year those job seekers who have completed services are surveyed, thus allowing the NC system to track their wage progression and likelihood of being employed over the medium term.

The CFS website includes reports and publications, the Supply/Demand Analyzer (labor market information), NC Tower (education data), and the WDB Dashboard⁴². All states publicize labor market information (to varying degrees of quality), some states collect longitudinal, outcome based educational data, but only North Carolina is truly transparent in the processes and outcomes of its local workforce development efforts.

As Massachusetts devotes significant new resources to early education, primary and secondary education, free community college and a plethora of workforce training and apprenticeship programs, it should consider tracking longitudinal data to critically evaluate the effectiveness of these public investments.

Policy Recommendations/Next Steps for Massachusetts

This analysis makes it clear that while there are many differences in the structures of the various states' workforce development systems, the biggest differentiator in terms of efficiency, program integration and ease of service is whether the federal WIOA programs are housed under one agency or multiple agencies. How each state's workforce system is overseen impacts the cost structure, the administrative processes and the funding allocations. It also affects staffing, as states where multiple agencies are involved have less uniform staffing requirements, resulting in varying job criteria, competencies and outcomes.

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There are several practices employed by other states that Massachusetts can adopt to improve the quality of state workforce development programs and the results they produce. The most notable practices are discussed below.

1. Appoint a Workforce Development Czar

Streamlining the oversight of the myriad of workforce development programs offered by the state needs to be a primary goal. Massachusetts has one of the most extensive workforce development systems of any state in the nation, but also the most diffuse. Workforce development dollars are appropriated to almost every executive agency, numerous MassHire offices, quasi-state agencies and other partners. To reduce redundancy, overlap and fragmentation, administration of these programs needs to be better integrated. Doing so will also facilitate more comprehensive and uniform outcome reporting while enabling more comparative analysis across programs.

2. More Robust Reporting and Performance Measurement Metrics

Despite Massachusetts' extensive workforce infrastructure, the state does not have a robust reporting and performance measurement system. Some information on performance is included in an annual report of the MassHire State Workforce Board⁴³, but metrics focus on the number of trainee enrollees, or business customers, rather than job placements. The completion rates for those in the program are relatively low. One looking for this type of information must search for it, as there is not a dashboard of or link to performance metrics on the state's Department of Labor and Workforce landing page as in some other states. A major obstacle to a more integrated reporting and performance measurement system is the limitation of use of employer wage data collected by the Department of Revenue and the Division of Unemployment Assistance to a subset of state agencies.

The Healey-Driscoll administration recognizes the need for better data, recently launching the Massachusetts Education-to-Career (E2C) Research and Data Hub⁴⁴. This hub serves as a publicly available education and outcome data repository geared to the needs of educators, policy-makers, researchers, and students and families, providing data on classroom progress, college and career outcomes, or school or college performance. While these measures are steps in the right direction, they are not comprehensive enough to inform policy makers about the effectiveness of specific programs as the system is built off a limited data set between only EOE and EOLWD.

A more robust data collection system that captures information from all state agencies receiving funds for workforce development, public and private institutes of higher education, and workforce training and development non-profit organizations in Massachusetts should be developed.

3. Integrated and State-of-the-Art Technology

The Healey-Driscoll administration has a real opportunity to modernize and streamline workforce training offerings by investing in modern and integrative data systems, collecting comprehensive data on outcomes, and releasing such data to the public. Prior attempts to develop a Massachusetts performance review system have been uneven. The current system, Massachusetts One-Stop Employment System (MOSES), which is currently used by MassHire governance and career centers, is a case management system. Massachusetts workforce development lacks a Customer Relations Management (CRM) platform that would "allow workforce regions to track, manage, and coordinate business services across workforce partners, enhance tools to better match job seeker skills and interests to open jobs, and track participation by race, ethnicity, gender, and other key demographics for all state and federal job training programs to limit duplicative data entry and allow for meaningful analysis."

The Healey-Driscoll administration launched MassTalent, as a portal to connect employers and job seekers that will better employ technology, but it is limited to certain industry sectors—healthcare, clean energy, life sciences and advanced manufacturing. This web portal needs to be expanded in scope to include all economic sectors and made available to every employer in the

Despite Massachusetts' extensive workforce infrastructure, the state does not have a robust reporting and performance measurement system.

Commonwealth. MassTalent should also be built out to capture demographic information about job seekers and training providers.

Florida provides a roadmap for how to transform Massachusetts' current workforce system to better align with the fast-changing needs of both employers and job seekers. As the Florida Career Source articulates, "every plan for transformation begins with a well-defined vision, rooted in purpose."

4. Better Efficacy and Efficiency

Given Massachusetts' labor shortage and uncertain fiscal outlook, its workforce training system should focus on improving efficacy and efficiency. The Healey-Driscoll administration has articulated a well-defined vision that transforms the current workforce training infrastructure into one that is more transparent, user-focused and continuously innovating in its current state plan, but must now take steps to make this vision a reality. The Commonwealth must identify and expand the programs that are best at achieving outcomes and eliminate or reform those that aren't working to accomplish this transformation.

More detailed reporting of performance and outcome related data is the first step to accomplishing these goals. The Healey-Driscoll economic development plan recognizes the importance of outcome data generally and could be expanded to specify workforce-related information. It could model its data collection after Connecticut, which has agency data stewards who ensure agency coordination with the policies of an executive body.

5. Provide an Inventory of All Current Offerings

Massachusetts offers a plethora of workforce-related training programs, funding sources and providers through numerous state agencies geared towards discrete segments of the population. For example, there are several programs targeted to at-risk youth that are offered through various departments, including the Department of Youth Services, the Department of Transitional Assistance and the Department of Children and Families. The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development should be charged with publishing a comprehensive list of programs available to the public, organized by category and targeted population. This would facilitate the process for job seekers, provide more transparency to the public and begin the process of eliminating overlapping programs.

6. Comprehensive Annual Review Process

As a companion effort, the state government should develop a comprehensive outcome-based review process utilizing longitudinal data to track median wages and employment status over time for program graduates. Mimicking the North Carolina CFS, Massachusetts should track customers on an annual basis upon graduation, so the Commonwealth can determine any correlation between workforce programs and wage growth or employment advancement.

Borrowing from the Texas Workforce Board evaluation process, Massachusetts should institutionalize the performance review for its extensive workforce development infrastructure by subjecting all MassHire offices and local workforce boards to an annual review and make the results readily available to the public. These reviews should be reported in a standardized format and utilized by lawmakers when appropriating resources. This will not only clarify the functionality of the systems but also hold those systems accountable to the public, making their processes transparent and allowing for comprehensive, third-party analyses that are not possible now.

While these recommendations are not exhaustive, they would go a long way to improving the current workforce development system. A well-functioning workforce development system is

crucial to the health of the labor force and to the productivity of the overall economy. Massachusetts has devoted ample resources to workforce training; it is now time to focus on sufficient managerial oversight of these government programs to be responsive to market conditions and best serve its constituencies.

The Healey-Driscoll administration has articulated a well-defined vision that transforms the current workforce training infrastructure into one that is more transparent, user-focused and continuously innovating in its current state plan, but must now take steps to make this vision a reality.

Appendix A



Connecticut

Total Population – 3,605,944
 Workforce Population – 1,901,400
 Unemployment Rate – 3.5%
 Labor Participation Rate – 62.3%
 Workforce Training Structure
 Workforce Training Funding
 Total Employer Establishments – 88,509
 Bachelors or Higher – 41.9%
 Median Household Income – \$88,429



Florida

Total Population – 21,538,187
 Workforce Population – 11,029,000
 Unemployment Rate – 2.8%
 Labor Participation Rate – 56.8%
 Workforce Training Structure
 Workforce Training Funding
 Total Employer Establishments – 616,961
 Bachelors or Higher – 34.3%
 Median Household Income – \$69,303



Maine

Total Population – 1,362,369
 Workforce Population – 687,322
 Unemployment Rate – 2.8%
 Labor Participation Rate – 59.5%
 Workforce Training Structure
 Workforce Training Funding
 Total Employer Establishments – 42,519
 Bachelors or Higher – 36.1%
 Median Household Income – \$69,543



Massachusetts

Total Population – 7,029,917
 Workforce Population – 3,850,600
 Unemployment Rate – 2.8%
 Labor Participation Rate – 64%
 Workforce Training Structure
 Workforce Training Funding
 Total Employer Establishments – 180,088
 Bachelors or Higher – 46.6%
 Median Household Income – \$94,488



New Hampshire

Total Population – 1,377,529
 Workforce Population – 774,510
 Unemployment Rate – 2.1%
 Labor Participation Rate – 64%



New York

Total Population – 20,201,249
 Workforce Population – 9,710,000
 Unemployment Rate – 4.2%
 Labor Participation Rate – 59.4%
 Workforce Training Structure
 Workforce Training Funding
 Total Employer Establishments – 535,758
 Bachelors or Higher – 40%
 Median Household Income – 79,557



North Carolina

Total Population – 10,439,388
 Workforce Population – 5,264,168
 Unemployment Rate – 3.4%
 Labor Participation Rate – 59.2%
 Workforce Training Structure
 Workforce Training Funding
 Total Employer Establishments – 247,458
 Bachelors or Higher – 35.9%
 Median Household Income – \$67,481



Rhode Island

Total Population – 1,097,379
 Workforce Population – 590,481
 Unemployment Rate – 2.7%
 Labor Participation Rate – 59.2%
 Workforce Training Structure
 Workforce Training Funding
 Total Employer Establishments – 28,989
 Bachelors or Higher – 35.9%
 Median Household Income – \$81,854



Texas

Total Population – 29,145,505
 Workforce Population – 15,497,000
 Unemployment Rate – 4.1%
 Labor Participation Rate – 62.1%
 Workforce Training Structure
 Workforce Training Funding
 Total Employer Establishments – 638,183
 Bachelors or Higher – 33.9%
 Median Household Income – \$72,284



Vermont

Total Population – 643,077
Workforce Population – 357,853
Unemployment Rate – 2.0%
Labor Participation Rate – 62.8%
Workforce Training Structure
Workforce Training Funding
Total Employer Establishments – 20,696
Bachelors or Higher – 44.2%
Median Household Income – \$74,755

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